

## Removing nuclear waste, one shipment at a time

June 26, 2012



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Elected officials and other dignitaries recently gathered at Los Alamos National Laboratory to celebrate the Lab's 1,000th shipment of transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez, the keynote speaker at the event, congratulated the Laboratory for reaching a "significant milestone of cleanup of defense-generated nuclear waste here in New Mexico."

"I am pleased to see the progress that has been made," said Martinez, citing the record number of waste shipments that have been transported to WIPP this year.

## **A milestone to be proud of**

Laboratory Director Charlie McMillan thanked the employees who made the waste removal campaign a success, noting that some of them have worked on the program since the first shipment was made in 1999.

"The milestone we're celebrating is one that has been a long-term environmental commitment for the Laboratory," McMillan said. "It shows we can combine mission execution and scientific achievement with protecting the environment and the public's health and safety."

In addition to Governor Martinez and McMillan, speakers at the event included San Ildefonso Pueblo Governor Terry Aguilar; Los Alamos County Council Chair Sharon Stover; Frank Marcinowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Waste Management for the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management; and Kevin Smith, manager of the Los Alamos Site Office.

## **Milestone coincided with the first anniversary of Las Conchas fire**

The June 26 event was held on the first anniversary of the Las Conchas forest fire. The fire, which edged close to Laboratory property, came within 3.5 miles of Technical Area 54, Area G, where the Laboratory's transuranic (TRU) waste is stored.

Although the waste is stored safely, a decision was made by the Department of Energy, the New Mexico Environment Department and the Laboratory to accelerate the disposal of 3,706 cubic meters of waste stored above ground at the Lab by June 30, 2014.

"The Las Conchas fire highlighted the need for urgent action on the cleanup of legacy waste here at Los Alamos," Martinez said.

## **Efforts to dispose of waste are ahead of schedule**

LANL's TRU Waste Program is ahead of schedule shipping the waste, and in fact sent out the 1,014<sup>th</sup> shipment at the conclusion of the celebration event.

"This really is a special day and took an awful lot of people to make this a reality," Smith said. "I can assure you that the National Nuclear Security Administration and Office of Environmental Management are absolutely committed to cleaning up the legacy waste from the Manhattan Project."

Said Martinez, "The 1,014<sup>th</sup> shipment signifies our continued effort to dispose of this type of waste, protecting future generations and keeping our state beautiful."

**Los Alamos National Laboratory**

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